



# The Economic Value of Volunteering in Canada

Statistics Canada, Table 36-10-0618-01  
· Released March 30, 2026

The number

# Volunteering contributes \$31.7 billion to Canada's economy every year

Total economic value of volunteering · Canada · 2023 · Table 36-10-0618-01

# \$31.7 Billion

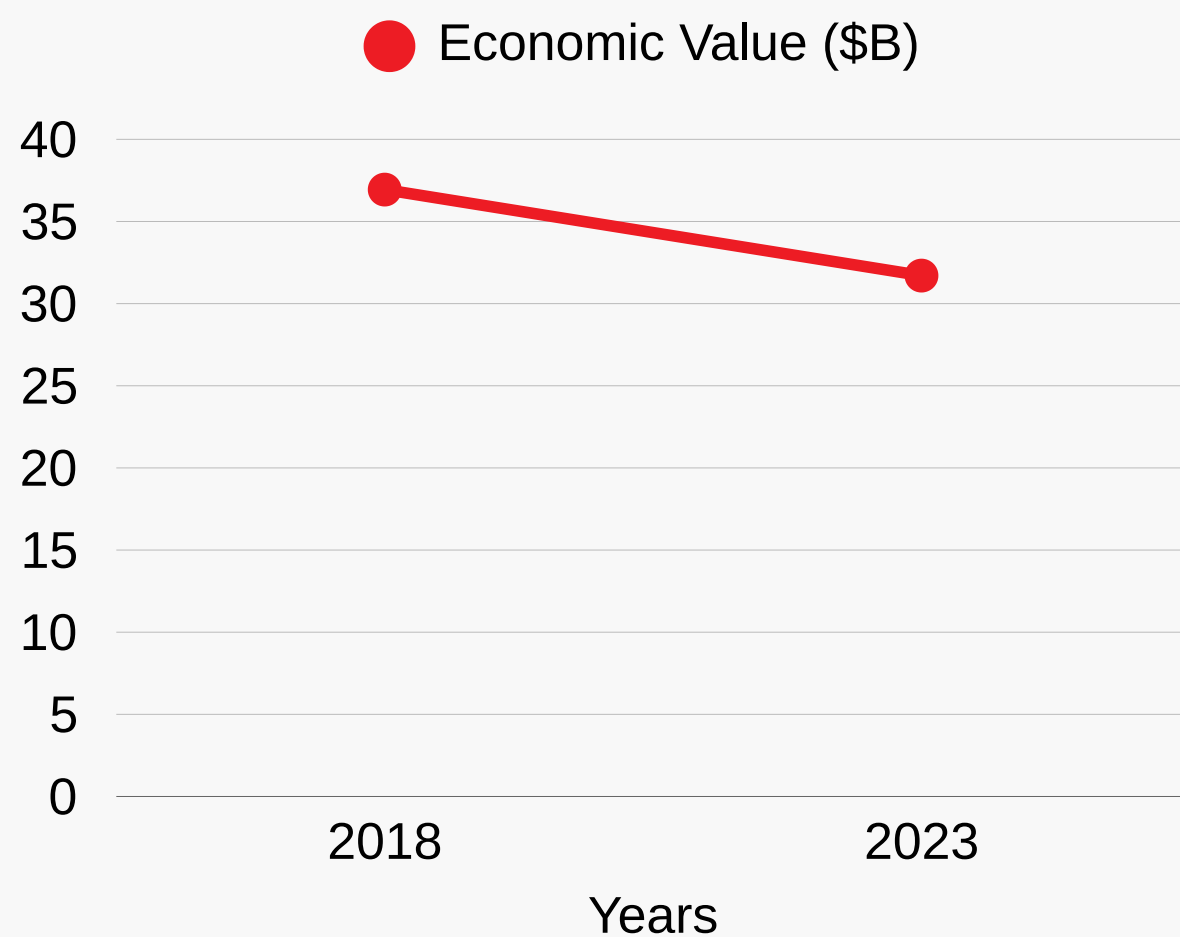
Economic value of volunteering in Canada, 2023

**\$31.7 billion is a floor, not a ceiling.** The figure captures formal volunteering valued at average wage rates. The actual contribution of volunteers to Canadian communities is substantially higher and cannot always be captured by a monetary figure.

## The decline

# Canada lost \$5.2 billion in volunteer economic value between 2018 and 2023

Total economic value of volunteering · Canada · 2018 and 2023 · current dollars · comparable cycles only



**-\$5.2B**  
total value lost  
2018 to 2023

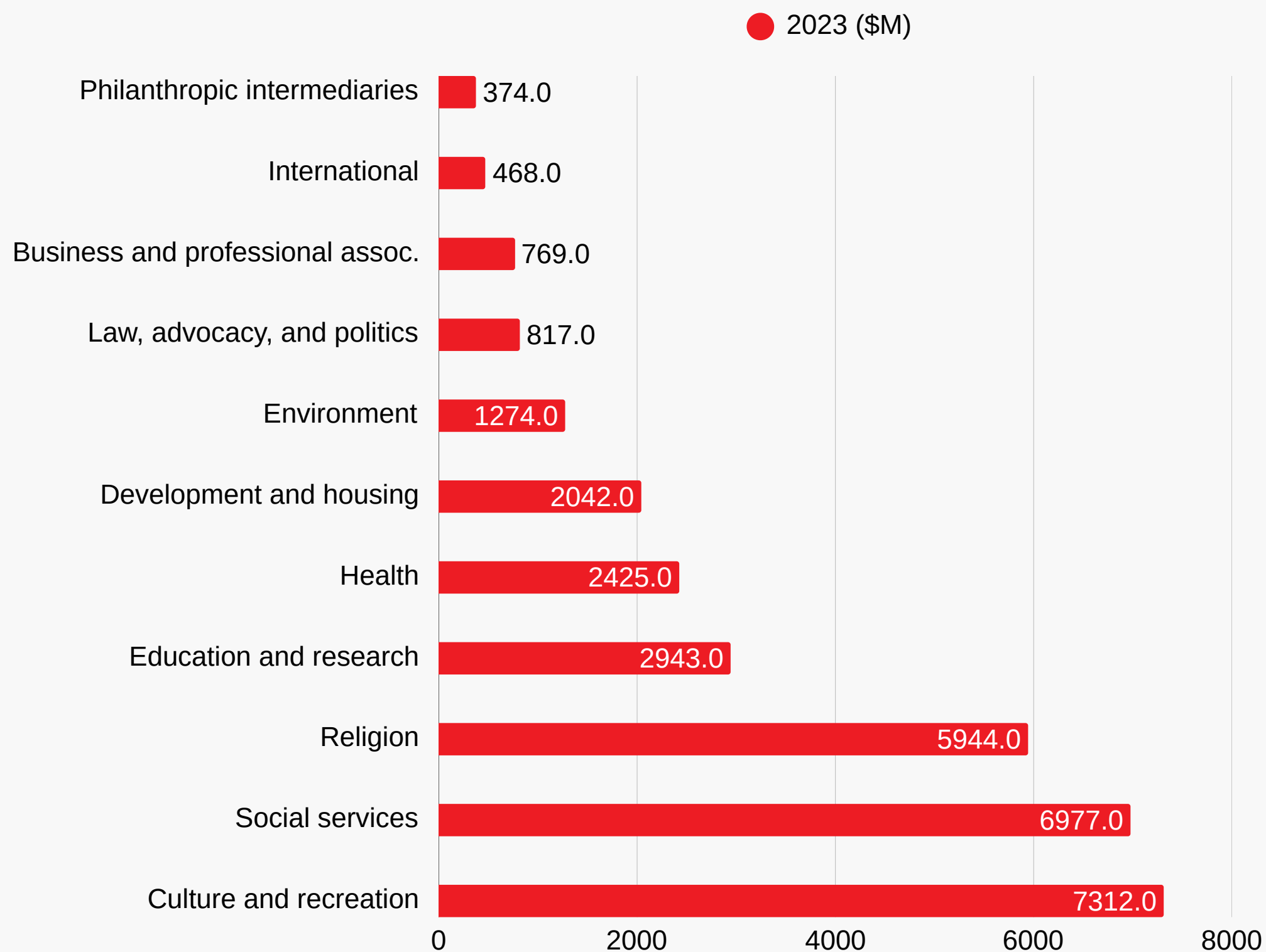
**-14%**  
decline in 5 years  
2018 and 2023 only

Note: 2013 data (\$41.8B) are not directly comparable to 2018 and 2023 due to methodological changes in source data.

**A 14% decline in five years** represents a structural reduction in the volunteer capacity that communities and organizations depend on, and the trend is visible across every sector and most provinces.

# Culture and recreation, social services, and religion carry more than 60% of all volunteer economic value

*Economic value of volunteering by sector · Canada · 2023 · \$millions · Table 36-10-0618-01*

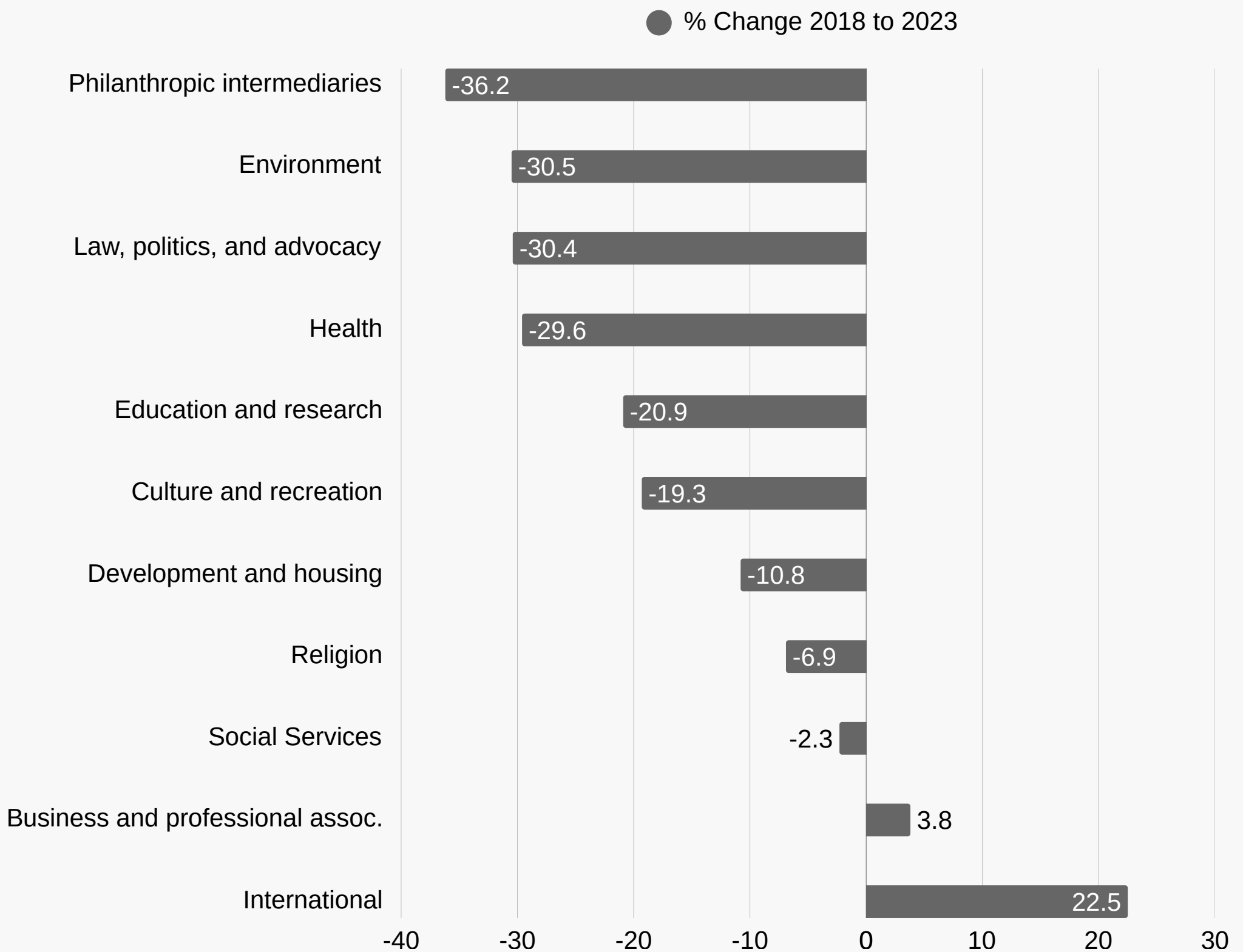


**Three sectors represent 63.8% of all volunteer economic value.** Organizations in culture and recreation, social services, and religion collectively carry the largest share and face the largest absolute exposure when volunteer hours fall.

## Sector Changes

# Most sectors lost ground between 2018 and 2023 - four fell by 25% or more

Percent change in economic value of volunteering by sector · Canada · 2018 to 2023 ·  
Table 36-10-0618-01

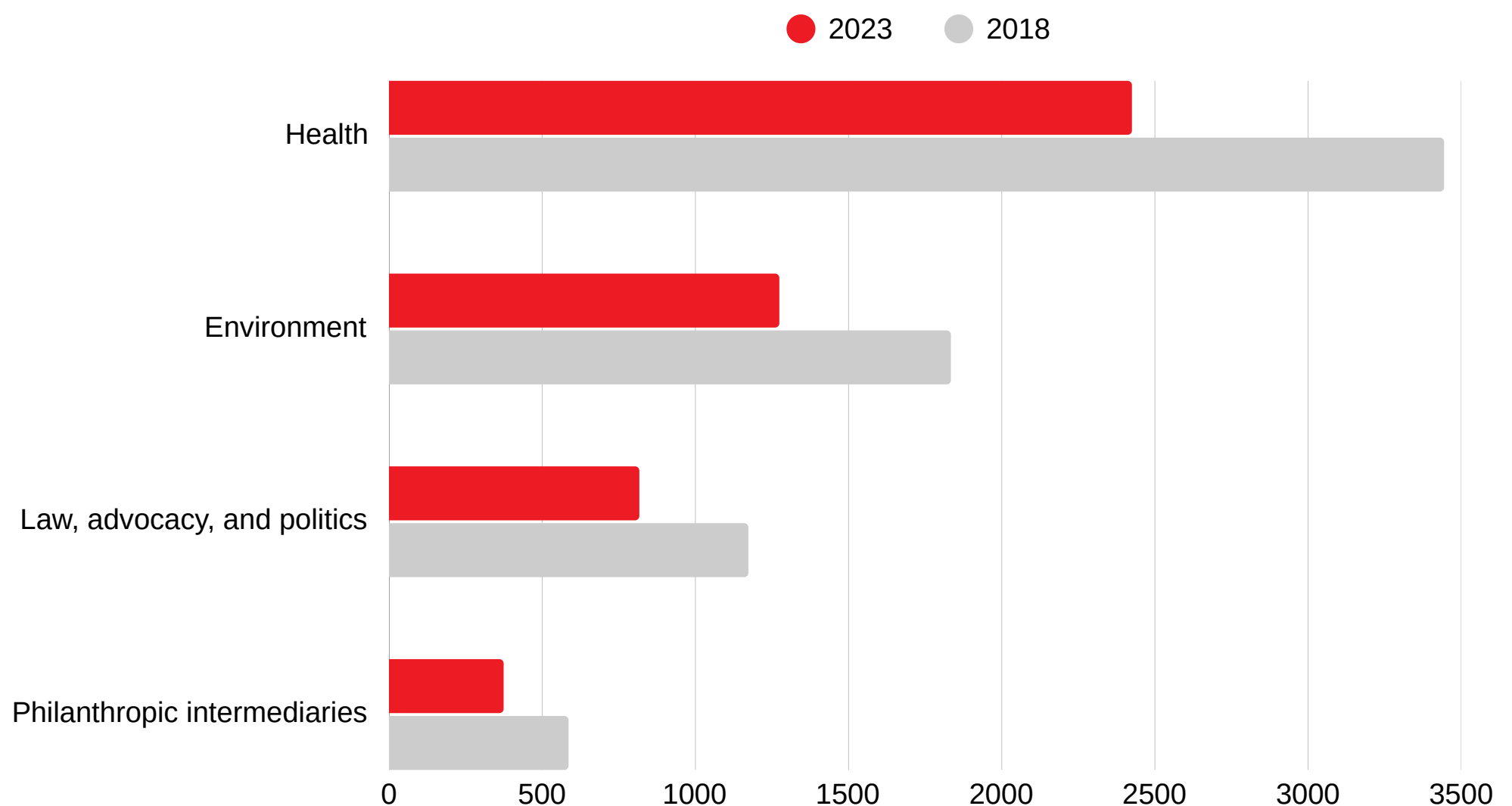


**Two sectors grew, one held steady, and eight declined.** The pattern is broad-based, not isolated. Organizations across most areas of civic life are managing with less volunteer economic capacity than they had in 2018.

The hardest hit

# Four sectors lost more than a quarter of their volunteer economic value in five years

Economic value of volunteering · four hardest-hit sectors · Canada · 2018 and 2023 · \$millions



**-36.2%** Philanthropic intermediaries

**-29.6%** Health

**-30.4%** Law, advocacy, and politics

**-30.5%** Environment

Philanthropic intermediaries, environmental organizations, legal advocates, and health volunteers form the connective tissue of civil society. **Their losses compound across the organizations they support.**

# Social services held steady, and two sectors grew

Economic value of volunteering · selected sectors · Canada · 2018 and 2023 · \$millions · Table 36-10-0618-01

**-2.3%**

Social services  
Largest sector by value - virtually flat

**+3.8%**

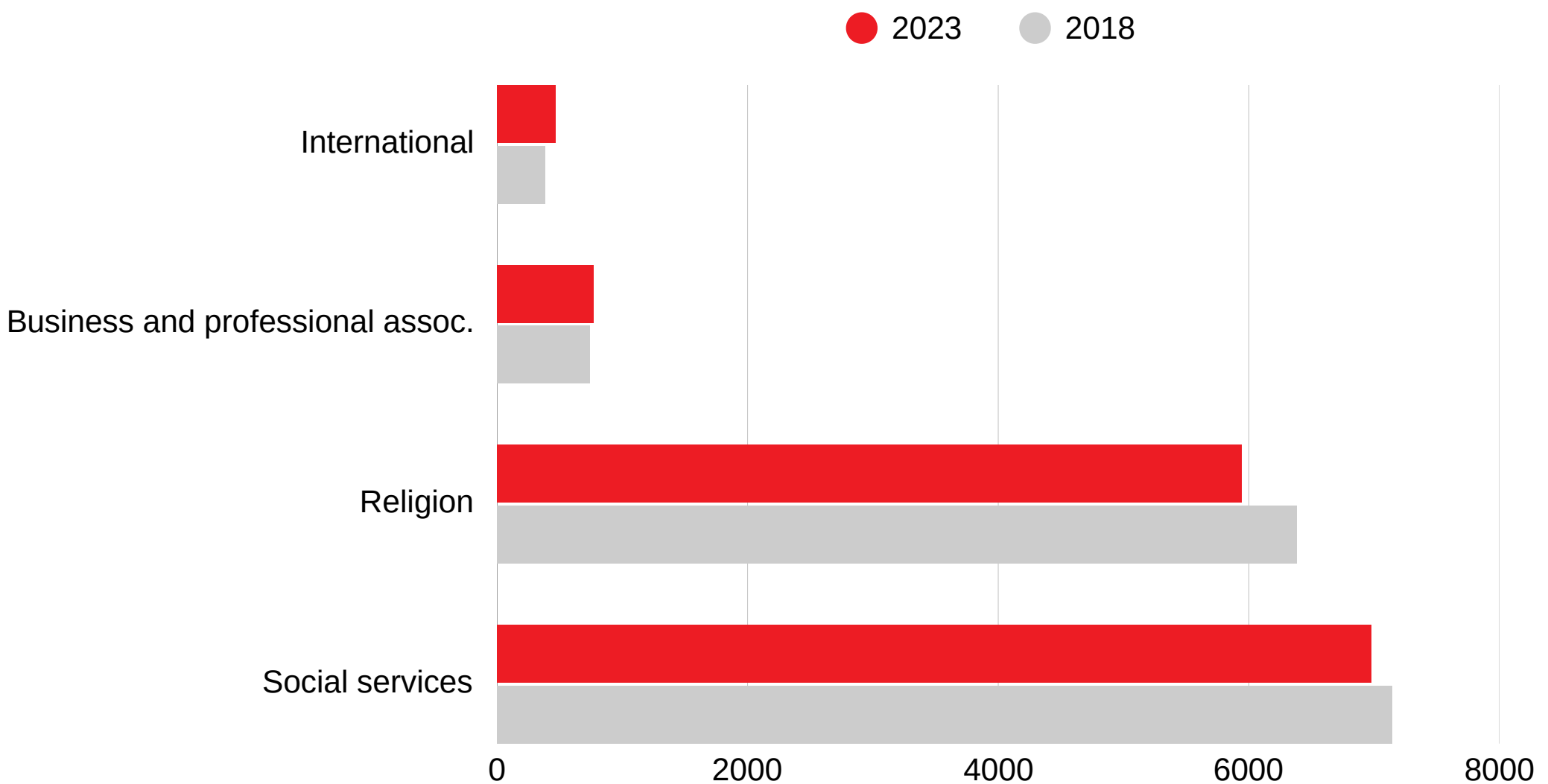
Business and professional assoc.  
Small base, but one of two sectors that grew

**-6.9%**

Religion  
Second-largest sector - modest decline only

**+22.5%**

International  
Smallest sector - strongest relative growth

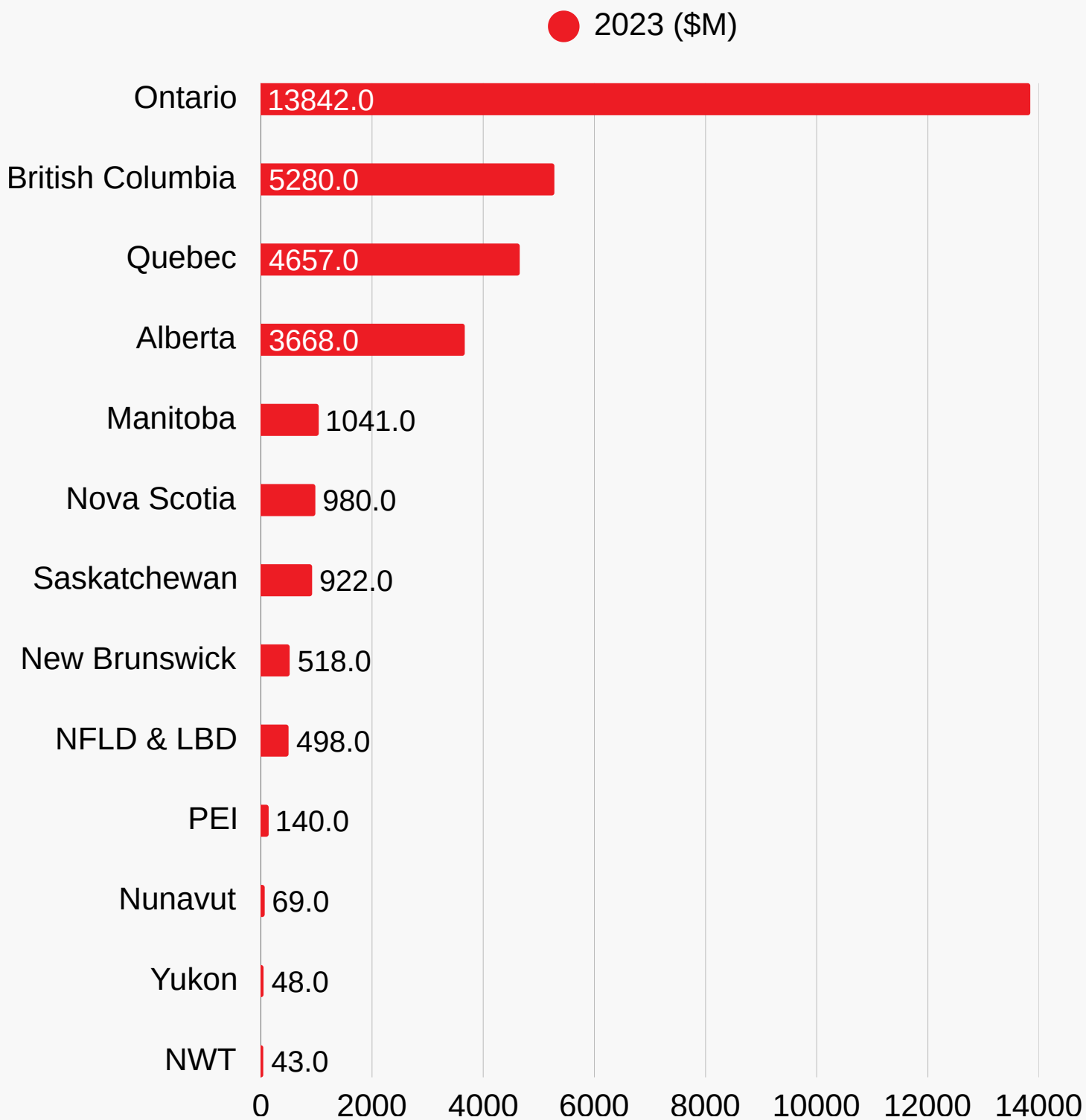


Social services is both the largest volunteer sector and the most resilient. A 2.3 per cent decline across five years in a \$7 billion base signals underlying strength, and the factors sustaining that stability merit further investigation.

That resilience may be approaching its limits. Demand for social services has been rising since 2023, and a volunteer base that held steady through a period of relative stability is unlikely to absorb a growing need without strain.

# Ontario generates nearly half of all volunteer economic value in Canada

Economic value of volunteering by province and territory · Canada · 2023 · \$millions · Table 36-10-0618-01



**43.7%**  
Ontario's share  
of national total

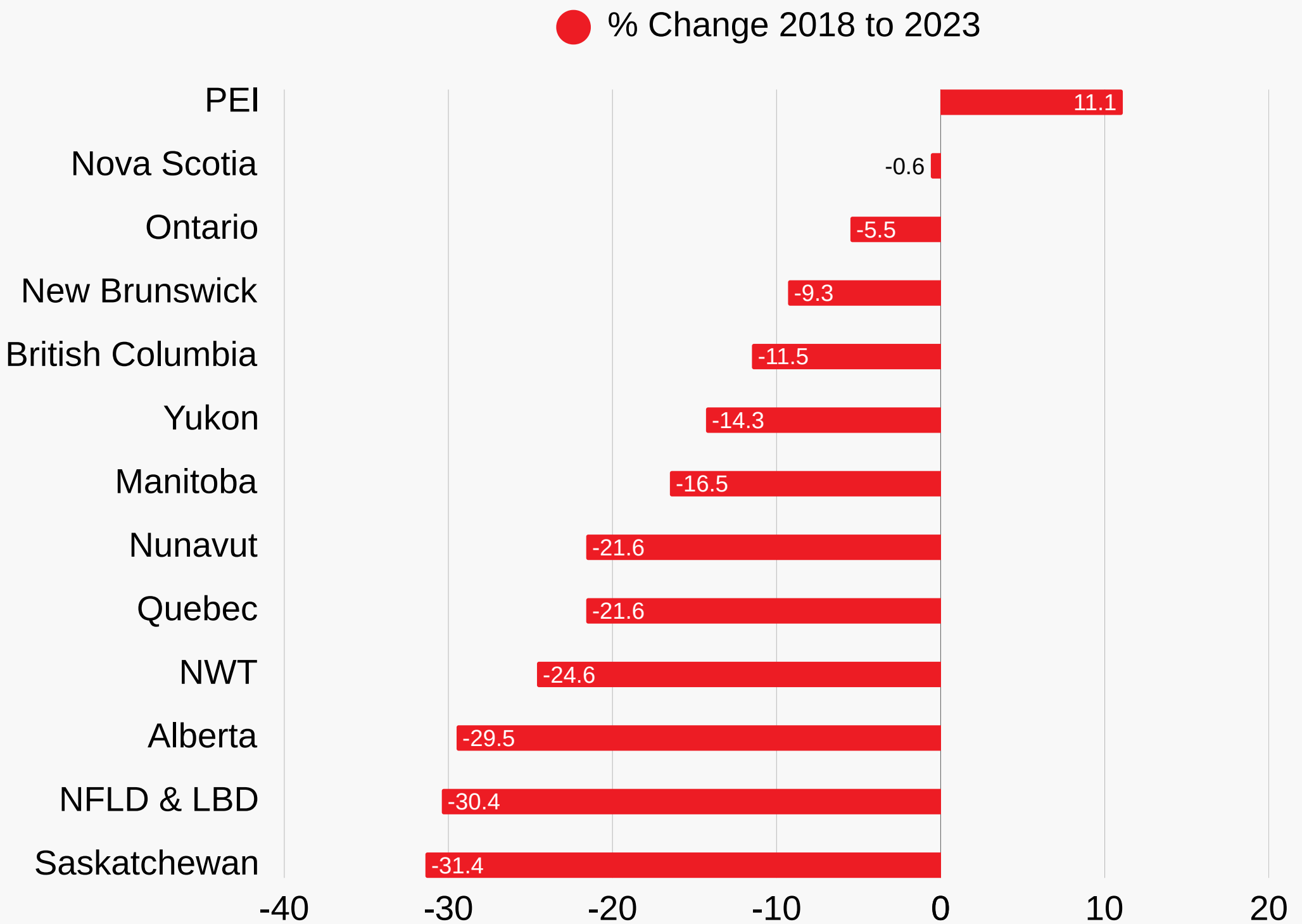
**86.6%**  
Top 4 provinces  
ON, BC, QC, AB

**13**  
provinces and  
terr.  
in the dataset

**Four provinces generate 86.6% of all volunteer economic value.** For national organizations, the health of the sector is disproportionately tied to what happens in Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec, and Alberta.

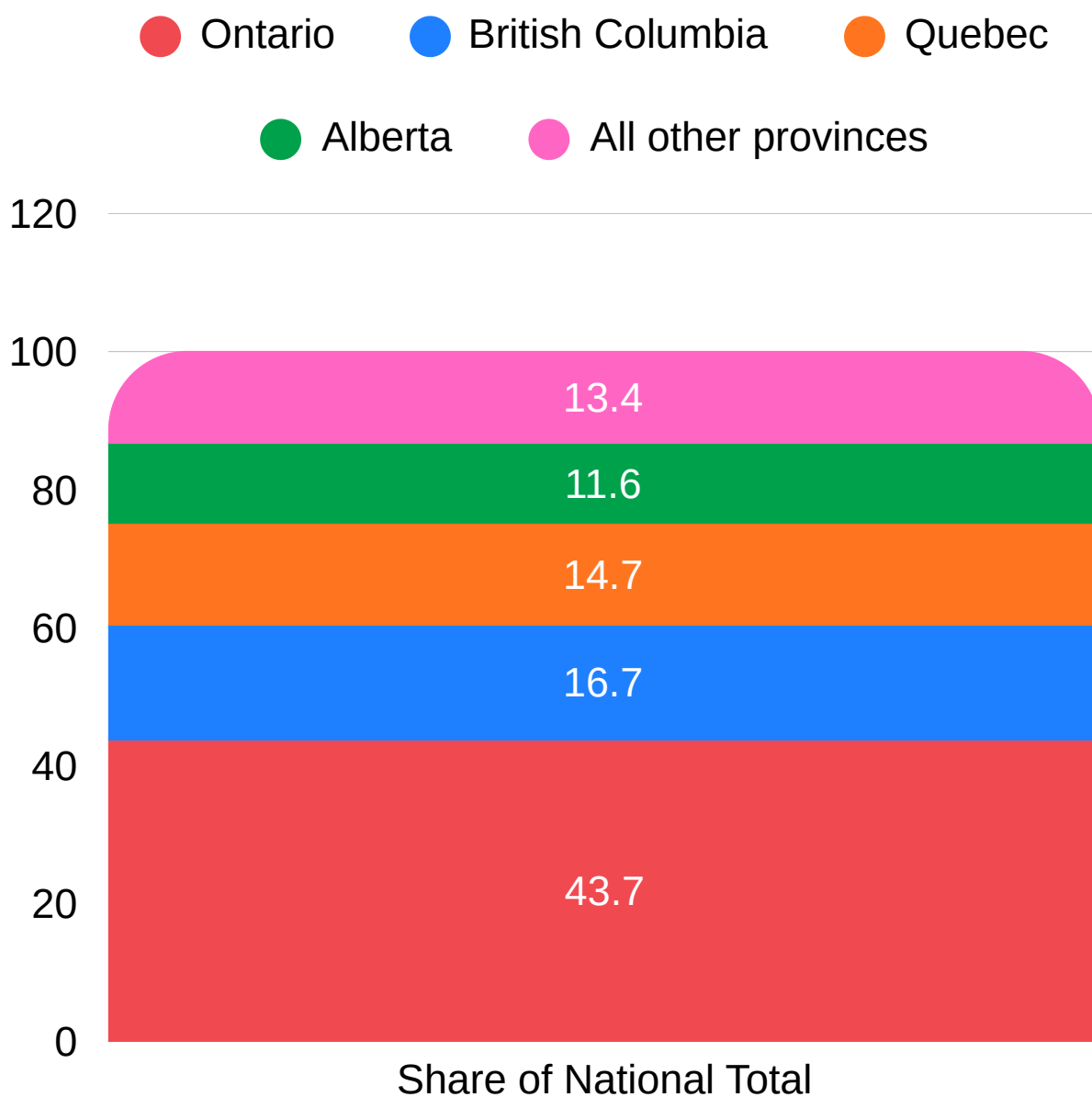
# Saskatchewan, Newfoundland, and Alberta saw the deepest losses - PEI is the only province that grew

Percent change in economic value of volunteering by province and territory · Canada · 2018 to 2023 · Table 36-10-0618-01



**PEI is the only province where volunteer economic value increased.** Organizations operating across regions should not assume the national -14% reflects their local context. The variation from province to province is substantial and operationally significant.

# Ontario accounts for more volunteer economic value than all other provinces combined



Province	2023 Value	Share
Ontario	\$13,842M	43.7%
British Columbia	\$5,280M	16.7%
Quebec	\$4,657M	14.7%
Alberta	\$3,668M	11.6%
All other provinces	\$4,259M	13.4%
<b>Canada Total</b>	<b>\$31,706 M</b>	<b>100%</b>

*This geographic concentration is a structural feature of how volunteer economic value is distributed in Canada - and a planning variable for any organization operating at national scale.*

**Ontario generates more volunteer economic value than the rest of the country combined.** Any further contraction in Ontario has outsized national consequences. For organizations with presence in that province, it is not a regional question - it is a national one.

The cost of not investing

# What happens if we do not act

**Programs shrink or disappear.** A 14% decline in volunteer economic value is a 14% reduction in delivered capacity. Organizations that cannot replace that contribution with paid alternatives will cut services. Some already have. The communities most affected are those with the fewest alternatives.

**The cost of equivalence rises.** Replacing volunteer labour with paid staff costs more (sometimes significantly more) once you account for wages, benefits, recruitment, and management. As volunteer capacity falls, maintaining the same service levels requires proportionally greater financial investment. Most organizations cannot access that investment.

**The connective tissue of civil society frays.** The hardest-hit sectors - philanthropic intermediaries, environmental organizations, legal advocates, health volunteers - exist because markets and governments leave gaps. When volunteer capacity in these areas falls, the gaps rarely get filled by another mechanism. They simply widen.

**The next cycle starts from a lower base.** Volunteering is a habit. Organizations that do not invest in building volunteer relationships now will enter the next five-year cycle with a smaller, older, and less experienced volunteer pool. The deficit compounds with each cycle of inaction.

Considering the data

# What organizations can do

**01**

## **Know where your sector sits**

Table 36-10-0618-01 breaks down economic value by all 12 activity sectors.

If your work is in health, environment, law and advocacy, or philanthropic intermediaries, your sector lost 25% or more of its volunteer economic value between 2018 and 2023.

**02**

## **Track hours - not just headcount**

The economic value figure is built on volunteer hours.

Organizations that count participants but not time cannot understand their real capacity, calculate their own contribution, or demonstrate what they stand to lose.

**03**

## **Calculate your own contribution**

Multiply your total volunteer hours by Statistics Canada's average provincial wage rate.

The result is a floor estimate of what your volunteers contribute. Use it in grant applications, board reports, and advocacy.

**04**

## **Plan for geographic concentration**

Ontario accounts for 43.7% of all volunteer economic value.

National organizations cannot treat the Ontario picture as a regional concern. What happens there shapes the national baseline, in both directions.

What this means for volunteer-  
involving organizations

# Volunteering is an economic force. Protect it.

- 1** **\$31.7 billion:** that is what Canada's volunteers contribute annually. It fell 14% in five years. Both facts belong in advocacy conversations.
- 2** **The losses are concentrated:** four sectors lost 25% or more. Three provinces lost nearly a third. The national average masks a sharper provincial story underneath.
- 3** **Social services held steady:** a 2.3% decline in a \$7 billion sector over five years is a signal of resilience worth understanding and sustaining. That resilience, however, may be reaching its limits. Newer research and trends suggest that demand for social services has been rising since 2023, and a volunteer base that held during a period of relative stability may not be sufficient to meet a growing need.
- 4** **Ontario's weight is a planning variable:** 43.7% of all volunteer economic value in one province is not background information. It is a strategic fact.